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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [KMCA](#) [KMPI](#) [YM](#) [DEMOCRATIC REFORM](#)

SUBJECT: MEPI PROJECTS SHOWING RESULTS IN YEMEN

1. Summary. MEPI programs are making progress and solidifying MEPI's track record in Yemen. CHF's vocational training center, forming a new partnership with local NGO Girls World Communication Center (GWCC), opened classes beginning in February. IFES has begun implementation of the GIS Boundary Delineation project, and the Financial Services Volunteer Corps (FSVC) will visit Aden mid-February to work on a restructuring plan for the National Bank of Yemen. Participants in the MEPI-funded e-learning initiative concluded their training February 3, marking the occasion with an enthusiastic graduation ceremony. End Summary.

CHF Finds a Match

2. CHF International began work in Yemen in June 2004. Funded by a MEPI Standing Program Announcement, CHF initially partnered with local women's NGO SOUL to found the Yemen Economic Development Initiative (YEDI). The project's core feature was a vocational training center for non-college bound youth in such fields as graphic design, bookkeeping, and business English. YEDI planned to offer internships with companies, local business apprenticeships, and a development center to help entrepreneurs start their own businesses.

3. The project was delayed six months, largely due to the departure of two CHF Yemen directors. When current Director Walid al-Husseini arrived, YEDI was under pressure to produce the same number of trainees in half the time, creating tension between CHF and SOUL. In December 2004, SOUL formally withdrew from the project and the project's future appeared threatened. Gabool al-Mutawakil, Managing Director of GWCC, confided that she had great respect for SOUL and believed that the breakdown was due simply to an organizational mismatch.

4. In January, CHF partnered with another local women's NGO, GWCC, specializing in youth training. GWCC has helped recruit teachers, furnished the facility, and is evaluating potential trainees. They are eager and able to take over management of the center from CHF in the future, and CHF is investing in capacity building to help them do so. According to the staff, relations between the two organizations are positive. The first round of classes began on February 5. CHF still claims that it can meet all of its stated objectives without a grant extension from MEPI, and plans to host a March 5 ceremony to celebrate the center's success. PD will work to ensure appropriate media coverage of the event.

IFES Draws the Lines

5. IFES Yemen has begun work on a two-year, 1.2 million USD project focused on the 2006 presidential and local council elections. The project's main goal is to assist the Supreme Council for Elections and Referenda (SCER) implement a GIS system to delineate electoral boundaries. Districting proved highly controversial in the 2003 election, when the SCER conducted delineation behind closed doors without consulting local councils or opposition parties. IFES intends to introduce a more effective approach, creating an inter-party supervision committee and processing census data through GIS to avoid gerrymandering and institutionalize an impartial system.

6. Success is dependent on the timely arrival of census data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), and SCER's ability to adopt GIS. The CSO's progress is uncertain, but IFES Director Paul Harris is optimistic that the data will be available in six months. IFES asked the SCER to pay for the GIS hardware, and SCER has agreed, but is looking for donor commitment to support accompanying software and training for 135,000 USD. IFES is requesting these funds from major donors.

7. In an effort to build SCER's independence, IFES formally told SCER Chairman Khalid al-Sharef that 2006 would be the final year for U.S. support. Harris believes that Sharef understood the message that SCER must make the transition to an independent and self-sustaining organization within the next two years. (Note: SCER independence would demonstrate the ROYG's commitment to democratic reform, a constant theme in Embassy dialogue with the ROYG as it seeks to qualify for

MCC. End note).

FSVC Touches Shore in Aden

18. In an effort to help improve Yemen's investment climate, the Financial Services Volunteer Corps (FSVC) will undertake its first consulting project in Yemen February 19-24. Following on their December assessment visit, FSVC will work with the National Bank of Yemen (NBY) to analyze proposals and select a consulting firm for the bank's restructuring initiative. NBY is one of four government-owned banks and its restructuring efforts have been stalled for five years. This bank is the only national bank headquartered in Aden, and is therefore central to municipal planning for commercial investment related to the Aden Port and the Aden Free Zone, both central to Yemen's future economic development. FSVC has scheduled additional meetings with the Agricultural Bank and the Local Economic Development Department at the Governor's Office in Aden. FSVC will discuss future project proposals with each group.

E-Learning Graduates its First Class

19. On February 3, Pol/Econoff attended a graduation ceremony for participants in the e-learning program funded by a 1.5 million USD MEPI Education Pillar grant. The initial phase of funding covered equipment and was administered by AMIDEAST. The training portion of the grant was run by EDC, an international education NGO, which subcontracted instruction to a number of organizations, including iEarn. The graduates were teachers from five Sanaa schools who had completed the third stage of training. After successful completion of methodology and information technology modules in the classroom, trainees learned to develop regional and international networks to begin designing their own on-line learning programs. EDC now expects these teachers to provide "cascading training" to their fellow teachers in the Sanaa school system. The same courses will soon be offered to teachers in Aden.

110. Response to the program was extremely positive, and many participants expressed their thanks for U.S. support. E-learning was also embraced by the Ministry of Education, which is encouraging EDC to offer similar classes within the Ministry's training centers. Project Director Towfik Sufian said that, at present, e-learning is Yemen in still in the development phase and he does not have the staff or resources to expand the program, but hoped this would change in the future.

111. Comment. MEPI programs are playing an increasingly important role in furthering the Mission's reform agenda in Yemen. In education, the MEPI projects are helping improve the quality of the workforce, contributing to preparation for a post-petroleum economy and the creation of domestic investment. FSVC restructuring assistance will provide a model for reform for Yemen's financial institutions to make economic growth possible. IFES's delineation project is part of the Mission's broader efforts to support independent institutions and give ordinary Yemenis a role in determining their own future. CHF's difficulties reflect the capacity issues faced by NGOs in Yemen. Future MEPI projects will help build NGO capabilities in Yemen so that they can be more effective in realizing their shared goals. End comment.
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